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ABSTRACT

This paper expresses the need for the federal government, specifically the U.S. Office of Education, to promote the cause of the arts in education. The Office of Education needs to declare that art is an essential part of the common core of education, particularly at this time, when there is growing skepticism concerning the effectiveness of public education. As part of the core curriculum, the arts (1) give expression to the urgings of the human spirit, validate feelings, organize perceptions, and give coherence to existence; (2) serve as powerful affective and cognitive teaching tools; and (3) serve as a self-renewing resource in a world growing increasingly barren in natural resources. Plans to link education with federal agencies which have programs in the arts are outlined by Mr. Boyer, present chairman of the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. (KC)

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ARTS IN EDUCATION:
The View from FOB #6 *

Ernest L. Boyer
U. S. Commissioner of Education

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*An address before the Annual Meeting of the International Council of Fine Arts Deans; Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 5, 1977

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In recent years a very special revolution in American education has drifted quietly across the land--a revolution that has moved forward almost unnoticed--and yet it is one of great consequence to our colleges and schools:

In the Wauwatosa district in Wisconsin an arts exhibit with speakers and slides from the Milwaukee Arts Center travels from school to school, and the program is supported by the school arts budget.

In New York State, the Empire State Youth Theatre Institute travels to schools all across the State--not just to present productions on the stage, but also to take young teacher/actors to the classrooms to teach science, language, and social studies.

Here in Minneapolis, the Urban Arts Project has created an exciting ungraded school without walls--a project in which students spend time in community theatre and dance companies, orchestras, chamber groups, and art galleries throughout the city; a project in which artists-in-residence and touring companies enrich the schools; a project with summer programs and special exhibitions staged by teachers and by students.

At thousands of schools and colleges in cities, towns, and villages, exciting new alliances have been formed--new partnerships among teachers, administrators and parents, among artists, museums, symphonies, campus faculty, education departments and arts councils.

For far too long, there have been high, forbidding walls between education and the arts. But now--at long last--those barriers have begun to fall.

This is the quiet revolution which I view with enthusiasm--and great hope.

I

But at this dramatic moment in arts education, one partner has been conspicuously absent--a fact that is driven home to me almost every day. For some peculiar reason the Federal Government has not only failed to join the revolution, but has seemed, at times, unmindful that a new vision is beginning to emerge.

I'd like to quote three very recent observations, to illustrate the point:

First, I'll quote from Coming to Our Senses, that marvelous statement by the Rockefeller Panel on the Arts in Education. In the report, panelist Elizabeth McCormack said in her refreshingly clear, perceptive way:

> It seems to me that leadership is needed if the arts are to receive the kind of attention they should. It must be made clear to the voters and the budget makers that there is no dichotomy between the arts and learning to read. In fact, a student who really gets an appreciation for beauty is much more apt to be able to read than the one who doesn't. Now the question is, What can the Commissioner of Education do in a leadership position to bring this about? If he does nothing, it is not going to happen; things are going to get worse instead of better.

My second comment comes from an HEW report just released last week. It's a review by Junius Eddy of nine arts-in-education publications. Having read and studied all of them, here is how Eddy draws the bottom line:

> The majority of public school systems in the nation still treat the arts as a kind of educational step-child. Thousands upon thousands of youngsters still graduate from high school without having been touched in any significant way by programs in the arts....Classroom teachers who, in schools without access specialists, are responsible for what little arts learning children may receive, possess few of the skills necessary for quality instruction in these disciplines. Arts specialists themselves are being eliminated from school faculties under the double-barreled pressures of rising costs and decreasing school populations. Support for needed research in the arts and aesthetic education is hardly discernible. And the interest among institutions of higher education for redesigning the education and retraining processes of both generalist and specialist teachers in the arts is visible in only a handful of "lighthouse" colleges and universities. (And, one is compelled to add, Washington's educational decision-makers and policy planners seem generally not to notice--to put it nicely.)

My third quotation comes from concert pianist Lorin Hollander, who was speaking last week in Columbus at a conference on the arts and education.

Merging the arts and education, Hollander said, is absolutely vital. Yet he saw great danger in store for the fragile experiments in collaboration now sprinkled through our schools and colleges. And the lack of a deep national commitment was an even greater problem. He said:

> We don't socialize our children to the arts. We have made a gruesome mistake in educational policy planning. We are the first society in human history to make that mistake. And now we see the results--violence, destruction, despair. We know all this. But how do we make them know all this--"them" who wield the power and the money?

In this composite jeremiad I've laid out, I'd like to repeat the three central points:

Elizabeth McCormack asks, "What can the Commissioner of Education do? If he does nothing, things are going to get worse instead of better."

Junius Eddy concludes, "Washington's educational decision-makers and policy planners seem generally not to notice--to put it nicely."

And Lorin Hollander asks, "How do we make them know all this--'them' who wield the power and the money?"

I know these questions are more in the spirit of a Socratic dialogue than hostile brick-bats. Even so, together they pose a larger question:

What is--or more precisely--what should be--the Federal role in arts and education?

And more specifically, What is the arts/education view from FOB-6--from Federal Office Building #6, the unhappy, cold, and sterile name that houses the U.S. Office of Education?

In answer to that question, I'd like to put my own convictions squarely on the line:

I'm convinced the time has come for the U.S. Office of Education to promote the cause of the arts in education.

It's time to reaffirm that art is not a frosting or a frill.

It's time to declare that art is an essential part of the common core of education.

And it's time for the Office of Education to build bridges to other Federal agencies which have programs in the arts.

II

This is, of course, not the time to be blinded by false fantasies. American education confronts enormous problems: rising costs, reductions in enrollments, failing bond issues, and budget cuts.

Once schools were thought to be the panacea for every social problem, but schools now face widespread skepticism. They are no longer viewed as the Nation's social hopechest. Because many are dissatisfied with the schools' performance in the fundamentals, many have become suspicious of so-called enrichment programs. And there is a deeper, more insidious push toward materialism--a move to relate education exclusively to a job, to money, and to possessions.

It would be naive not to recognize that confidence in our schools and colleges has declined, that education in this country is no longer met with a blind embrace. But I'm convinced that the current mood of skepticism--accompanied as it often is by a dash of hope--is more relevant, and more healthy, too.

People in this Nation still believe in education, they still want schools to be places of great excellence, and they still want their children to be well served.

There is still in our midst a spirit of expectancy--a deep conviction that we need our colleges and schools and that education for the future must somehow be still better than the education of the past.

III

This leads to my central observation. What we need today is a clear vision of the role of arts in education to focus the leadership we all must exercise. I'd like to put forth three convictions which will not be unfamiliar to those assembled here.

First, we must promote the arts because they are inherently of great value. It has been said that humans are distinguishable from animals because of language, our mastery of complex symbols. Well, perhaps what separates humans from humans at their very best is art--color, rhythm, form, sound, rhyme, and movement.

The arts, in short, give expression to the profound urgings of the human spirit. They validate our feelings in a world that deadens feeling. They organize our perceptions and give meaningful coherence to existence.

Wallace Stevens, in his poem Anecdote of the Jar, put it this way:

> I placed a jar in Tennessee,
> And round it was, upon a hill.
> It made that slovenly wilderness
> Surround that hill.
>
> The wilderness rose up to it,
> And sprawled around, no longer
> wild.

Art, the jar in Tennessee, tames the slovenly wilderness of modern life. It orders and shapes the chaos to share its message patterns of meaning and great beauty.

But art is needed in education--not just because it's valuable in and of itself, but because art is a powerful teaching tool as well. This is my second point.

The arts serve affective education, to be sure. But they also improve cognitive learning.

We are beginning to discover for ourselves what great artists have always known: The theatre can teach history. Dance can teach the social sciences. Photography can teach literature and mathematics.

The arts provide other teaching benefits as well. They often spark new classroom interest, improve attendance, stimulate the love of learning, and the love of other people.

Joan Mondale, speaking not long ago on the arts and education, put it this way:

> There are many benefits to the incorporation of the arts into the core curriculum of an educational system, the most vital of which is to promote the growth of the whole child. This concept has been well demonstrated in communities where a comprehensive partnership between the arts and education has been thoroughly tested. There's no question that when the arts are combined with other subjects in a general curriculum, the arts improve perceptions, attitudes, understandings, and the motivation of school children.
>
> They break down not only the barriers to learning, but also the barriers raised by our society in a racial and economic and social way. In this atmosphere, children learn to share, to experience and to create together. They learn to be sensitive to others. They learn social skills that are indeed vital in our rapidly changing world.
>
> Communities that have introduced arts programs into the general curriculum are often so pleased at their success that the arts are rapidly absorbed into their over-all school program and typically not without major economic increases. Colleges and universities are aware of this trend and they are initiating programs that concentrated attention on preparing leaders for arts programming in schools and in their communities.

Dramatic examples of Mrs. Mondale's powerful message can be found almost everywhere: from the Open City Project in New

York's Barrio, where reading scores have risen dramatically after children visited New York's cultural riches and then had follow-up work in the arts.

To the ACCENT program in West Virginia's Kanawha County Schools, which uses art, music, drama, and creative movement to teach basic communication skills to disadvantaged children.

To the Arts in Motion projects in Greenwood and Saluda, South Carolina, funded by the Emergency School Aid Act, which help with school integration by the using artists in residence and visiting jazz groups.

There is a third--and perhaps most compelling reason why we need to link education and the arts. We are beginning to confront a world where our traditional resources will be limited and we must find ways to live together satisfactorily within constraints.

It seems quite clear to me that all great changes in American education have been in response to the changing social context.

In 1918, for example, after World War I, our schools were meeting waves of immigrant children who were driven here by the hopes offered by this young democracy. At that moment in our history the National Education Association issued an immensely influential report called Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, which shaped American schooling for several generations.

The NEA report said that the high schools should be vastly expanded to include these new children. It urged the curriculum to switch from the classical college preparation to the vocational and "life skills" curriculum needed by this burgeoning new society.

After World War II, the Conant report on the high school was to transform our institutions once again; this time, too, it was in response to a broader social context.

The Cold War was upon us.

The Russians had launched Sputnik. Academic excellence needed to be pushed--especially in mathematics and science.

The Conant high school--adopted by Americans almost overnight--was a blueprint for response to the enemies at our gates.

Today, I am convinced we have entered yet another era in our history: one to which education must again respond.

This time, however, the enemy is within.

We are beginning to discover that the inexhaustible resources of this planet which have fed our creature comforts may in fact be finite.

We are beginning to discover that the artificial barriers of nation states cannot--and must not--isolate us from the agonies of others.

And we are beginning to discover that we face a battle not only over resources, but other attitudes as well.

The lesson for our schools and colleges is now becoming clear. We must begin to educate about the emerging world and to teach students how to draw increasingly upon the inexhaustible resources in our lives to stimulate and cultivate the non-perishable resources of the human spirit.

In a world increasingly barren of its natural goods, the arts may be seen as a self-renewing resource--a source of riches for any person.

For these reasons, and others too numerous to mention, the time has come to weave the arts into the very fabric of our education. It's time for all of us to focus on the agenda for the future.

Together we must place the arts in the curriculum--at its very core.

Together we must see to it that the buildings at our colleges and schools become places of great beauty, environments which reflect the respect of our civilization for the arts.

Just last week I visited an elementary school in Schenectady, New York. The building itself was rather humdrum, but the classrooms and corridors were brilliantly alive with color, posters, paintings, and photography by the children. Beauty can enrich, even if the initial setting is quite barren.

Together we must provide our creative students and faculty more opportunities for performances, and for exhibitions.

Together we must provide technical assistance to the hundreds of communities and institutions who want to share their arts and education resources.

Together we must introduce more students to the arts.

Now, more than ever, all students need the capacity to see clearly, to hear acutely, to feel sensitively the space which is all about us, and to know, once more, the beauty of language and the power of memorable speech. These skills are no longer just desirable; they are now essential if we are to survive together with civility and joy.

Together we must communicate more with artists and art centers outside the classroom. We must move beyond the campus to discover the rich tapestry of ethnic theatre, to find dance which is close to ritual; to enjoy distinctive crafts long ago forgotten or recently revived.

Together we must engage in a careful, historical study of the arts. The arts scholar has, for over 60 years, been an integral part of the higher education ssystem in this country. But scholarship should not stand alone or become isolated.

We should look for: new ways to link scholarship with performance, new ways to develop authenitc and meticulously produced plays and dances of the past, new ways to forge connections between the arts and anthropology, and renewed emphasis on the sociology of the arts.

Together we must engage in creative new arts research--to learn more about the aesthetic response, the physiology of the brain, symbol systems, notational norms, and the problems of perception.

V

And now may I close at the point where I began. I began by saying that as we seek to link together education and the arts there is a Federal role to play; and I'd like to tell you more precisely just what I have in mind:

First, I intend to coordinate--more effectively than before--OE's existing programs in the Arts.

Second, I'd like to see greater interagency collaboration in the Arts.

In several weeks I will become Chairman of the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities--the only body charged by Congress with coordinating Federal policy in education, humanities, and the arts.

This Council--whose membership includes the Chairman of both Endowments, the Secretary of the Smithsonian, the Librarian of Congress, and the Director of the National Gallery of Art--has been called "a largely dormant body." I plan to include on its agenda a creative new interagency push for the arts in education.

Similarly, the Office of Education is now intimately involved in the work of the National Endowment for the Arts as it begins a year-long task force on the education, development, and training of professional artists and arts educators--an effort whose staff director and inspiration come from leaders in your own association.

Currently OE's programs in arts education are scattered across half a dozen offices and bureaus. The Arts and Humanities Staff administers the best-known program.

But there are arts education funds in many other pockets: in the Emergency School Aid Act; in Career Education; in the Gifted and Talented Program; in the Ethnic Heritage Program; in Title IV-C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; in the Teacher Corps; in Bilingual Education; in Follow-Through; in the College Library Resources Program--and in a host of other hidden pockets.

I intend to organize an inter-bureau Task Force on the Arts in Education to give greater meaning to these scattered efforts and to declare that arts in education is a top priority of this Administration.

Third, we will push for more support for Arts Education. The Federal budget process is long and complicated, and we are in the midst of it right now. Until the President presents his budget to Congress next year, and until Congress acts, appropriations are not firmly fixed.

Nevertheless, and within the constraints of that important process, I want you to know that arts and education will receive significant and favorable attention from us as we prepare our final budget submissions.

Fourth, I intend to support enthusiastically the concept of "saturation" programs:

Pilots engaging the talents of the entire community in an intensive effort to make the arts a central concern of the schools and colleges in a region.

Projects involving parents, teachers and faculty, artists, business, local government, arts institutions, community service agencies and administrators.

Such pilot "saturation projects" should have breadth as well as depth: I'd like to see such programs launched not only in three cities, say, but in three States as well.

We must begin to demonstrate in strategic States and cities just what will happen when arts education becomes pervasive, when schools and the community begin to collaborate with each other.

These are the moves we intend to make as we seek a new partnership with you.

VI

I wish to make one final observation. While I have talked of arts and education, I wish to stress that excellence in education is in fact the goal.

It is my determined hope that our schools will educate for effective living--and that every student will achieve what on another occasion I have called "the educated heart."

The educated heart means to me a deep respect for excellence wherever it is found. The educated heart means: an expectation of beauty, a tolerance of others, a reaching for beauty without arrogance, a courtesy toward opposing views, a dedication to fairness and social justice, precision in speech and thought, and a love for graceful expression and audacious intellect.

These may be lofty goals, but they are, I am convinced, still within our grasp.

In his poem The People, Yes, Carl Sandburg put it this way:

> Once having marched
> Over the margins of animal necessity,
> Over the grim line of sheer subsistence
> Then man came
> To the deeper rituals of his bones,
> .....
> To the time for thinking things over,
> To the dance--the song--the story
> Or to the hours given to dreaming
> Once having so marched

During the long years of recorded history--and with all of the agony and expectancy of birth--civilization has marched

over the margins of animal necessity, has moved beyond the grim line of sheer subsistence.

Now the time has come for us to turn to the deeper rituals of our bones.

# # #